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Cathy Jain

Having accrued a following at the age of only seventeen, Cathy Jain is a testament to a new mode of Gen Z creators. The Yala! Records alt-pop up-and-comer took some time to answer our questions, touching on her personal history, the influences behind her music, and what's next.

For those unfamiliar with your music, can you tell us who you are, where you're from, and a little bit about the music that you make?

Hiii I'm Cathy! I'm 17 years old and I live in a small town in South Cheshire. I grew up in China and Australia and I only just moved here 4 years ago. My music so far has been written and recorded in my bedroom, but I think it's more alt-pop than bedroom pop. I love to experiment with different genres so my songs can often have elements of R&B/hip hop/indie, every now and then I like to add some drama with something psychedelic too ;)

How long have you been making music?

I wrote my first song when I was 9 years old after watching Taylor Swift's Fearless Tour on YouTube. I was so in awe of her performance and talent that it made me want to pick up a guitar and swing my hair back and forth. From there I began songwriting and haven't really stopped since.

Can you tell us about what went into your new single, 'cool kid'?

In 'cool kid', I wanted to talk about how we create an artificial image of ourselves in order to meet other people's expectations. I wanted to explore this idea and ask the question: "is this me being fake?". In the song there's a sense of acceptance; my main character doesn't mind adapting her personality depending on the person she's with, in fact it is something very natural to her. I think many people, especially teenagers my age, can relate to this 'artificial image' but I don't think it is something to be ashamed of; call it a new kind of authentic!

Through the music I wanted to paint a picture of a lazy summer afternoon by a river so decided on making a laid-back, R&B-style vibe. I worked with my friend Rob Heron on the production and we came up with this super chill hip-hop beat that really fit the mood I was going for. The wobbly synth that enters from the very beginning perfectly illustrates that hazy summery image I pictured in my head.

How does it feel to be making your own music at such a young age?

I feel like 17 is really old hahaha! I guess that's because I've been writing songs for a long time already and my style has changed and developed over time. I've just got so much music that I want to get out that I feel a real urgency to keep writing and recording as if there isn't going to be enough time!

If you could collaborate with anybody at all, who would you choose and why?

I would love to collaborate with Joji. I have been a fan of his music for a long long time and I just think he is such a unique artist. His ability to convey sadness, fear and loss in his music is so impressive. 'Slow Dancing in the Dark' will always be one of my favourite songs.

Who would you say are your biggest musical influences?

I'm a huge fan of Frank Ocean's music and just love how interesting and experimental his productions are. However I'm mostly influenced by female artists like Lana Del Rey, King Princess, Phoebe Bridgers and Girl In Red. Lyrics play a big part in my music and these artists are amazingly talented lyricists that always find ways to surprise me and inspire me.

What do you hate most right now?

Gosh! Hate isn't something that I feel that often lmaooo. Right now the only thing that I really hate is my hay fever!

What do you love most right now?

As a kid, I used to love watching the Studio Ghibli movies and recently I decided to re-watch them all and WOW!!! I had forgotten how beautiful they were! The animation, the music, the storylines, the characters all give me such a strong sense of nostalgia and I'm so impressed by how the directors are able to evoke such passionate feelings from the audience. Studio Ghibli films are the best at reflecting the innocence of childhood and are so wholesome that they're almost sad to watch. My favourites would be *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* and *Howl's Moving Castle*. Strongly recommend!

How's life with Yala! Music treating you?

Those guys are just so cool. From the first call I had with them I felt really at home. Felix and Mo are just so supportive and enthusiastic and the whole team are great at what they do. You can just tell when people are motivated by a passion for what they're doing and I feel so honoured that they like my music. When they told me how much they loved my songs it just felt unreal!

Now that things are easing up around the world, do you have any particular plans for live shows?

I definitely want to go see some live shows!! The truth is that I've never actually been to a proper gig that I wasn't performing in. I was 15 when the first lockdown hit and living in a small town there's not that much on your doorstep. So my plan is to go to as many gigs as possible from small bars to arenas! For my own shows, I have Gold Dust lined up at the end of July and will try to fit in as many performances as I can before college starts again in September!

What's next? If you're at liberty to discuss, what more can we expect from you this year?

I'll be releasing more music with Yala! in the very near future and I'm always writing and recording in every spare minute. There should be some interesting festival-related announcements to come soon too ;)

Which releases from this year have you been listening to?

The bus journey to college takes about an hour so every Friday me and my friends do an album listening party. Chloe Moriondo's *Blood Bunny* was one of the standouts for me. My favourite on the album was definitely 'Slacker' because I'm a sucker for sad songs that are (unfortunately) very relatable. I've also been listening to Eloise's new album and again, the songwriting is so beautiful and her music is so stripped back, jazzy and easy to listen to.

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